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Title: Keneya Ciwara Strives for ‘Excellence in Health’

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Description: Implemented by CARE and its partners, the Keneya Ciwara project strives for excellence in health (the Bambara mythical creature, Ciwara, representing “excellence in work” inspires the name). The goal of the project is “to reduce mortality rates among Malian women and children”.

HEADLINE: Keneya Ciwara Strives for ‘Excellence in Health’

IMPACT: The recent Keneya Ciwara project aspires to make the lives of Malian women and children longer and healthier.

QUOTE:

Dr. Sangare Madina Ba: “The results are visible: when you go to the villages and talk to the townspeople...it’s obvious.”

BODY:

In the courtyard, newborn babies decry their arrival; young women laugh, sitting on benches waiting for a consultation; and doctors in white coats go from building to building.

Step inside one of the buildings, and you may find Haoua Diarra counseling a woman about contraceptives, family planning, or pregnancy. Diarra, a midwife, has recently graduated from the new Keneya Ciwara family planning and reproductive health training program, a two-week intensive course on modern contraceptive methods and patient counseling.

This is the scene at one of several medical Reference Centers (CSREF) located near Bamako. The facility houses a hospital, maternity ward, laboratory, and dentist, among other services.

The Project

Implemented by CARE and its partners, the Keneya Ciwara project strives for excellence in health (the Bambara mythical creature, Ciwara, representing “excellence in work” inspires the name). The goal of the project is “to reduce mortality rates among Malian women and children”. Thus, Ciwara aims to improve access, availability, and use of quality medical services. When the project began in September 2003, the plan was to train professional health workers (doctors, nurses, midwives) on up to date medical practices and interpersonal communication skills. These health workers would then coach community based agents (CBAs) and provide health care to people in their communities. Today, 46 midwives and 1,500 CBAs have completed the program; the goal is to have 3,000 CBAs working in the field by the end of this year. “We are growing at a very high rate,” says Dr. Sangare Madina Ba, the reproductive health specialist. Already, in the first few weeks of 2005, fifty midwives are beginning their training with new books and materials bought by funds from USAID.

Training consists of two parts: theory and practice. Healthcare workers are instructed on how to make their patients feel at ease and establish a trusting “provider-client” relationship. In addition, they are introduced to the latest methods of family planning and health research findings. Previous to the Ciwara training, Diarra had not been instructed in family planning since 1984. However, thanks to Ciwara, the services

she provides have greatly improved and the number of clients increases daily. “If a [patient] is satisfied, she will refer her friends,” Diarra comments. The government has funded a private consulting room in Diarra’s clinic, serving as testimony to the health center’s rising success.

Expanding Horizons

Dr. David Awasum, Head of Communications, says that although the Keneya Ciwara program is still young, its achievements are already measurable. Behavior change among the population has “greatly increased as shown by the [growing] demand for services...,” Awasum says. More than 10,000 women of reproductive age are now using modern family planning methods. Fifty-six percent of infants in the Keneya Ciwara areas received DPT vaccinations before their first birthday and thousands of pregnant women and children are now sleeping under insecticide-treated mosquito nets.

One of the most effective and long-lasting methods of family planning the center offers is the IUD, or Intra-Uterine Device. An assessment done in 2004, just before the training program began, found that clinics had only one or two insertion kits, making it almost impossible to administer more than two a day. USAID purchased additional kits for each clinic, and as a result, each clinic can now serve many more clients on a daily basis.

Challenges

Creating communication tools that cater to all nine of Mali’s official languages and regional dialects is a challenge, as is finding enough CBAs to cover the vast country.

Maintaining sufficient supplies of vitamins, vaccines, and contraceptives can also be a problem.

Looking Toward the Future

This coming year, the Keneya Ciwara project aims to ameliorate the services it provides. Among the goals is training at least 1,500 new CBAs and widening the geographical reach of the program. Ciwara plans to increase their influence at the community level by widespread distribution of educational material. Also targeted are monthly monitoring of centers around the country and monthly committee meetings. With an eye on the future, Keneya Ciwara will certainly achieve excellence in health.

--- Nellie Vishnevsky, January 6, 2005

USAID/CARE Keneya Ciwara offering
clinical materials to Medical Reference Center
for ensuring quality services

Community Liaison provides health information and education to a woman

Outreach services (immunization antenatal cares)
to hard to reach communities to greatly reduce mother
and child mortality